

He's the One!

A Genealogy of Glorious Grace

Matthew 1:1-17

Mark Vroegop

1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. 2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, 3 and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, 4 and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, 5 and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, 6 and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, 7 and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, 8 and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, 9 and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, 10 and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, 11 and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. 12 And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, 13 and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, 14 and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, 15 and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, 16 and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

17 So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations (Matt 1:1-17).

Why would you start a book with a genealogy? It is not a very interesting way of grabbing the reader's attention. Any good author knows that you need engage your reader immediately. For instance:

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair" – Charles Dickens, The Tale of Two Cities.

"The cold passed reluctantly from the earth, and the retiring fogs revealed an army stretched out on the hills, resting" - Stephen Crane, The Red Badge of Courage .

None of the other gospel writers (Mark, Luke, or John) open their books this way either.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” – the Apostle John, The Gospel of John.

Matthew stands alone with this unusual opening. So why does he start this way?

Over the next seven weeks we are going to find out. Today marks the beginning of a seven week study of Matthew 1-4 called “He’s the One.” And you can probably gather from the series title an initial clue as to what Matthew is trying to accomplish. However, there is much more here than what you realize. This book is a massive and complex treatment of the life of Jesus. So before we jump into the genealogy, let me first give you an overview.

Setting the Stage

The very first verse helps to set the stage for us: “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.” Nearly every word in the verse is critical.

It is a **book**. It is filled with stories about the life, ministry, and teachings of Jesus. But don’t think for a second that the Gospel of Matthew is a collection of stories. It is narrative theology. Matthew is declaring important truth, and he does it through the story of Jesus’ life.

It is a book of the **genealogy** of Jesus Christ. Notice that it doesn’t say “a book containing the genealogy of Jesus Christ.” The word “genealogy” is the Greek word genesis, which means beginnings or origins. And it could be that Matthew intended for this book to be seen as recording the new beginning of God’s creation through Jesus.¹ Some students of Matthew believe that an appropriate title could be “Book of New Genesis wrought by Jesus Christ, Son of David, Son of Abraham.”² Other options could be “Book of the History of Jesus Christ” or “this will be the story of the New Creation.”³ This book is tell the story of God’s new work.

It is a book about **Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham**. The three titles summarize Matthew’s view of Jesus. He was the promised one to the father of the Jewish people. He was part of the line of the David, connecting him to the throne of Israel. And he was the Christ, the Lord’s anointed. If you put these together you clearly see that Matthew wants people to know that Jesus is the Messiah. In other words, He’s the One!

¹ David Turner, Matthew – Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic Publishing, 2008), 16.

² W. Davies and Allison.

³ Leon Morris, The Gospel According to Matthew – Pillar New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), 19.

It is written by a man named **Matthew**. Who is he? He was a disciple of Jesus whose was also called Levi, and he was a tax-collector in the area of Capernaum until he met Jesus. According to Luke 27:28, Matthew left everything to follow Jesus.

The book of Matthew has a strong **Jewish** flavor to it. There are about fifty quotations from the Hebrew Bible, and there is a strong theme of fulfillment throughout the book. As you read the book you will find that Matthew frequently says, "in order that what was said by _____ might be fulfilled" (see 1:22, 2:15, 2:17, 2:23, 4:14, 8:17, 12:17, 13:35, 21:4, 27:9). But fulfillment in Matthew is more than promises coming true; it is about ethical, historical, and prophetic fulfillment through the ministry and teaching of Jesus.⁴ It is about how Jesus is the fulfillment; he came to fulfill the Law (Matt 5:17). Therefore, the audience of the book clearly seems to be a group or several groups of Jewish Christians who needed to fully understand the way that Jesus had fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies and how his teaching fit with the Law.

The theme of the book is to show that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah, sent to bring the kingdom of God to the entire world. The book has a Jewish foundation and a global mission. Its story- line begins by presenting his lineage, his miraculous birth, and his empowerment for ministry at his baptism. Jesus' ethical teaching is presented in the Sermon on the Mount as fulfilling the law and the prophets. His teaching and his life reaches out the outcasts of society.⁵ As his ministry continues, it grows in scope and in opposition. Jesus teaches his disciples, confronts the religious leaders, heals the sick, and receives a mixed reception. Everything grows in intensity. The disciples completely misunderstand his mission, the religious leaders plot to kill him, and Jesus talks about the closing of the age. All of this culminates in a major conflict in Jerusalem where Judas betray him, and the religious leaders bring him to Pilate for prosecution. He is condemned, crucified, and buried. God raises him from the dead, and Jesus appears to his disciples. The end of Matthew records his final charge and the climax of the book:

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt 28:18-20).

Matthew presents Jesus as the rightful heir and promised deliverer. The book alternates between narrative and discourse, story and sermon, both having the same point: to present Jesus as Messiah. This Gospel tells us what happened (i.e., a story) but for a theological reason. So don't think that this book is just a collection of stories about Jesus. Matthew has an agenda; he has a purpose. There is something that he wants his readers to know and that is why he starts with a long list of names. He wants us to know that Jesus is the One – the

⁴ Turner, 25

⁵ Turner, 1

Messiah, the Son of David, the son of Abraham - who has come to bring the kingdom⁶ to every nation.

The Grace of a Genealogy

With that as a background and explanation of 1:1, let's turn our attention to the significance of this long list of names. This is so much more than a genealogy, and it makes perfect sense why Matthew would start this way when you understand what is really going on. There are two clear messages embedded in this list.

1) God keeps his word!

Keep in mind the order that we saw in 1:1 – Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham. It is how the genealogy is organized. The ESV Bible even identifies this with corresponding paragraph breaks in verses 2, 6, and 12. As well, notice that Matthew traces the list back to Abraham (not Adam as Luke does in Luke 3:23-38), and also notice that David is in the middle.

Further, there is something special about the number 14. If you skip ahead to 1:17 you will see:

17 So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations (Matt 1:17).

There are two important statements made through organizing the genealogy this way. The first is connected to three different seasons in Israel's history (i.e., Abraham-David, David-exile, exile-Jesus). The second is connected to the number fourteen.

First, what is unique about these **three seasons**? The first season – Abraham to King David – connects Jesus to the promises God made to Abraham. He was the long-awaited one through whom "all the nations of the earth will be blessed" (Gen 12:1-3). His promise fulfilled. The second season – David to the exile – connects Jesus to the promise that God would not always discipline his people. He is future hope. The third season – exile to Messiah – connects Jesus to God's faithfulness to his people in spite of their rebellion against him. His faithfulness displayed. Therefore the three sets of 14 generations record the history of Israel, all of which point to one person – Jesus.

⁶ The theme of kingdom (kingdom of heaven and kingdom of God) is a very frequent concept in Matthew. We will deal with this issue at length in the coming months. But suffice it to say at this point that I see the word "kingdom" referring to a spiritual kingdom and a literal / future kingdom. I prefer to think of it as "already but not yet." More to come on this!

Secondly, why does he use the number **fourteen**? He uses it to overlay David upon this genealogy. You need to know that Matthew never intended this genealogy to be an exhaustive list of every person in Jesus' lineage. Every person on the list is related to Jesus, but not everyone who could be is on the list. The list has a spiritual value beyond a list of relatives.

Matthew has a two-fold purpose: 1) He wants to connect Jesus to Abraham ethnically, and 2) more importantly, he wants to connect Jesus to David legally. He wants to show that Jesus is the One! He was the messiah, the one to whom "the Lord God will give...the throne of his father David" (Luke 1:32).

But why fourteen? The Jewish people often used the numerical value of letters as an interpretive technique or symbol. Well guess whose name is 14th on the list? David! Further, if you were to write the David in Hebrew it would be DWD since there are no vowels. The numeric value of the letter D was 4 and W was 6. What does 4+6+6 equal? 14!

Matthew wanted David be a defining feature of this list. He is sending a clear message – Jesus is the One! He is the promised Son of David. He is the son of Abraham. He is the Messiah.

You see this genealogy is not just a list of names. It is record of God's grace.

- It tells us that God keeps his word. He is faithful to all his promises. I was reading in Joshua 21 this week when I came across this stunning reminder:

45 Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass (Josh 21:45).

- It reminds us that even in the dark days when God is disciplining us or circumstances are hard – he has not forgotten us.
- It shows us once again that God has everything worked out. God is working his plan even though we don't see all the ways or how he is going to do it.

This genealogy is so much more than a list of names. It is a record of God's faithfulness to his people, and it all centers on Jesus – He's the One. God keeps his word.

2) God's grace is broad

The second thing that is very remarkable about this genealogy is who is listed. The genealogy is filled with some all kinds of people – some who were stellar examples of obedience and others who were exactly the opposite. But it is remarkable here that God lists a total of five women. It is almost as if Matthew went out of his way to include these women in the list. Almost as if he wants us to know that 1) the gospel is not a male-only gospel, and 2) that the gospel came to people who were marginalized. In other words, God's grace is broad.

I find it amazing to consider the background of the women on this list. It speaks so clearly of God's love for people who others might consider outcasts.

"God's grace in Jesus the Messiah reaches beyond Israel to Gentiles, beyond men to women, beyond the self-righteous to sinners. In saving his people from their sins, Jesus is not bound by race, gender, or scandal."⁷

First, there is **Tamar**. Do you know who she is? She was the Canaanite daughter-in-law of Judah, and her husband, Er, was killed by God for his wickedness. When her brother-in-law, Onan, refused to marry her and give her children, God killed him too. Judah refused to give her any more of his sons, and so Tamar devised a scheme. According to Genesis 38, she pretended to be a prostitute, and Judah unknowingly conceived a child by her. After it was obvious that she was pregnant, Judah called her out on the issue only to have Tamar reveal that the child is his. The ill-conceived child is listed in 1:3 – "and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar." Despite the abuse done to her, prostitution, and incest God graciously included her in the line of his son.

Secondly, there is **Rahab**. She was also guilty of prostitution but for her it was a profession.⁸ She lived in the city of Jericho, and she protected the two spies who were investigating the land of Canaan. She lied in order to save the spies who were hiding in her house. And God not only spared her life and the life of her family; she was David's great-great grand-mother.

Third, there is **Ruth**. Like Tamar and Rahab, she was not an Israelite. However she was a godly and caring woman who was a model of righteousness. After her husband died and after she returned to Israel Ruth met Boaz. Ruth was a Moabite who should not have been married to her first husband anyway because God forbid his people to marry the Moabites (see Deut 7:3). But God treated her with great kindness. Everything about Ruth's story drips with the sweet and kind grace of God.

Fourth, there is **Bathsheba**. Now she is not actually mentioned by name. Verse 6b says, "David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah." She, of course, was the woman with whom David committed adultery, and whose husband David arranged to be killed in battle. God's consequence for them was the death of the child that they had conceived. But it is their son, Solomon, who is next in the lineage of Jesus.

So the lineage of Jesus is loaded with a very wide swath of grace. John MacArthur says, "If He had called sinners by grace to be His forefathers, should we be surprised when he calls them by grace to be His descendants?"⁹ The genealogy of Jesus is filled with people who have skeletons

⁷ Turner, 28.

⁸ John MacArthur, Matthew 1-7, (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Publishers, 1985), 8.

⁹ MacArthur, 9.

in their closets, moment of their past that they'd like to forget, painful experiences at the hands of others, and the pain of being an outcast.

But they are still part of the list! That is beautiful, isn't it? It reminds me of Ephesians 1:1-6 –

It wasn't so long ago that you were mired in that old stagnant life of sin. 2 You let the world, which doesn't know the first thing about living, tell you how to live. You filled your lungs with polluted unbelief, and then exhaled disobedience. 3 We all did it, all of us doing what we felt like doing, when we felt like doing it, all of us in the same boat. It's a wonder God didn't lose his temper and do away with the whole lot of us. 4 Instead, immense in mercy and with an incredible love, 5 he embraced us. He took our sin-dead lives and made us alive in Christ. He did all this on his own, with no help from us! 6 Then he picked us up and set us down in highest heaven in company with Jesus, our Messiah (Eph 2:1-6 – THE MESSAGE).

Jesus, He's the One! Do you see your story in the genealogy?

- Ever felt like an outcast, as if no one wanted you, or as if you've been rejected by everyone? Those kinds of people are in Jesus' family.
- Ever been unfairly treated by others, tried to get ahead on your own, and have it blow up in your face? Those kinds of people are in Jesus' family.
- Ever made a really bad decision in the past? Ever done something so bad that you have to live with it for the rest of your life? Those kinds of people are in Jesus' family.
- Ever done something that hurt a lot of people, maybe even got someone killed? Those kind of people are in Jesus family.
- Ever started out really strong in something (like a job, marriage, your morals) only to blow it in the end? Those kind of people are in Jesus' family.

The point is this: "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Rom 5:20). And that is the beauty of what Matthew is trying to tell us here. He wants us to walk with Jesus. He wants us to hear his parables and listen to his teaching. He wants us to see his confrontation with the religious leaders. He wants for us to see how he died and to celebrate that he's alive. And then he wants us to take the message of grace the world – to anyone who will listen.

And against the backdrop of our individual sin and the regrets of our past, Matthew calls us to point to people to Jesus. This long list of names calls us to receive Him for the first time, remember again, or declare to the world that...He's the One!

© College Park Church

Permissions: You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce this material in any format provided that you do not alter the content in any way and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: by Mark Vroegop. © College Park Church - Indianapolis, Indiana. www.yourchurch.com